

**REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE  
AND REVIEW PANEL**

(Meeting held on 8 March 2001)

**1. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES – CHARGING: DISCUSSION PAPER (MINUTE NO.21)**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda in the light of concerns about conflicts between legislation, which affected the legality of charging for the use of public conveniences. A report would be brought back to the Panel in due course, when the situation had been clarified.

In the ensuing debate it was noted that the charging situation would not be resolved before the new public conveniences on the Quay at Lymington were open. It was likely to cause considerable anger amongst users if charges were introduced at sometime after the conveniences had been opened free of charge. It was therefore agreed that a notice would be displayed explaining that charges were likely to be introduced at a later date.

**2. REFUSE AND STREET CLEANSING BEST VALUE ASSESSMENT (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 22).**

The Panel received the Best Value Assessment of the Councils' refuse collection and street cleansing service. This included recycling and waste management. The final report on the assessment was attached at Appendix 1 to report H, to the Panel.

Members' attention was particularly drawn to Appendix 3 to the final report. This set out the identified action points and a provisional timetable. This would form the basis for part of the Panel's work over the coming months. It was agreed that progressing Appendix 3 should be included in the Panel's Work Programme, and there should be a standing item on the agenda for each meeting to monitor progress and to allow more detailed evaluations to be requisitioned.

Members questioned the policy on back door collections of domestic refuse and the effect that this had on the tender price for the refuse collection contract. It was agreed that a review of the policy should be included in the Work Programme, for review in January 2002.

In answer to questions, Members were advised that, through the operation of project Integra, the Council was close to meeting DETR targets for levels of recycling. Locally, there was an operational limit through the capacity of the recycling centre. A second site was needed. Once recycling collections were established around Fordingbridge, the Council would achieve 33% recycling. With the development of a trial composting scheme in the area around Everton, the Council should achieve 40% recycling.

Members were also advised that the payment of grants from monies raised from landfill tax was being reviewed to widen the type of project that could be supported. The more general effects of the increase in landfill tax, that had been announced in the Budget the previous day, were not however clear.

Members suggested that the Councils' own policy base should be a reference point against which budget proposals were compared to make sure that they were compatible.

**3. BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 23).**

The Panel noted variations in capital and revenue expenditure that had been identified since their last meeting. In answer to questions, Members were advised that £58,000 had been spent on flood relief works in the Ripley area. This should help prevent problems in the future by improving water courses below the village. The work had established that one of the main drainage routes had been impeded by pipelines that had been laid across it, and this was being pursued. It was noted that these works had only been possible, to this scale, because they had been carried out in conjunction with additional schemes that were grant aided by Government. The majority of local people were very grateful for the action being taken.

**4. OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 24).**

The Panel considered an outline work programme to guide their activities over the coming months.

It was also agreed that an item would be included on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss the need for a special meeting in July to examine the expenditure plan proposals. In addition, a report should be brought forward evaluating the potential for a Web Page which includes information on issues such as flooding, land drainage and coastal protection;

It was noted that the arrangements for New Forest Pride Week should be given urgent thought in the light of the current foot and mouth disease restrictions;

**RECOMMENDED:**

**(a) That the Work Programme be amended by the inclusion of the following items:**

- **An additional meeting in the Autumn to give consideration to expenditure plan proposals;**
- **Review of the grounds maintenance contract at the September meeting;**
- **An up-date on the response to foot and mouth disease at the next meeting.**

- (b) *That the Work Programme, having been revised to take account of the above changes, and any others made at the meeting, as attached at Appendix 1 to this report be circulated to Members in the near future.***

**5. AIR QUALITY REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT (MINUTE NO. 26).**

The Panel received a presentation on the Air Quality Review and Assessment which had been carried out over recent months. The draft report had been submitted to the DETR, and other consultees for comment. It would then be finalised and published.

Members were advised that there was no action plan as a result of the report as there were no definite exceedances on any of the measured substances. The subsequent modelling work carried out by the Environment Agency had suggested that there may be an exceedance of sulphur dioxide emissions from the Fawley Refinery. It was possible that it might be decided that there was a need for an air quality management area to be imposed, but further evidence was needed before this would be considered. In such circumstances, an action plan would be needed.

It was noted that it was necessary to monitor air quality in the longer term. In addition to making sure that existing standards continued to be met it was possible that standards would be tightened, as scientific methods improved, and the basis for evaluation and enforcement would therefore change.

**6. REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF AIR QUALITY – REQUESTED CHANGES TO BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 27).**

The Panel was advised that, as part of the air quality monitoring and assessment there had been extensive modelling of the information gathered which suggested that there may well be exceedances of sulphur dioxide emissions from the Fawley Refinery. In order to establish whether such exceedances were taking place it was necessary to install a further, real time, pollution monitor to gather information and to validate the modelling exercise. This equipment could be funded by diverting funds from the budget originally set aside to fund consultants to carry out modelling work. In the event the modelling had been carried out by the Environment Agency at no cost to the Council. It was noted that the additional monitoring station would be installed in the Jubilee Hall at Fawley, for security reasons.

It was agreed that the Advisory Cabinet and Policy and Resources Committee should be advised that the Panel supports the transfer of £15,000 from the business unit budget set aside for consultancy fees, to the service equipment budget for air pollution to allow the purchase of a sulphur dioxide monitor to be approved.

**7. TARGET 1 OF THE MAFF HIGH LEVEL TARGETS FOR FLOOD AND COASTAL DEFENCE – POLICY STATEMENT (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 28).**

The Panel considered the draft policy statement which had been prepared to guide the Council's response to flood and coastal defence risks. This was a requirement which had been imposed by the Government on all operating Authorities who had responsibilities in this field. The statement was also considered by the Crime and Disorder and Economy and Planning Portfolio Performance and Review Panels.

The Panel discussed the issues that were relevant to their Portfolio and advised the Advisory Cabinet that they supported the Policy Statement, as set out. They noted that there was considerable confusion over which body carried responsibility for the various types of watercourses, their care and maintenance. In a District such as the New Forest, which had a significant network of watercourses, those people dealing with the issues on a day to day basis learned which Authority was responsible in each case. The definitions were not however sufficiently clear to allow an ordinary member of the public to form an informed view. This had compounded the problem in the recent flooding in the District. It was agreed that consideration should be given to including an article in the Autumn edition of Forest News which included key contact points, and also some self-help suggestions to help people cope with actual or potential flooding.

It was agreed that the Work Programme should include an evaluation of which organisations were responsible for the various types of watercourse, and ways in which the system might be improved.

Members also discussed the beach replenishment work which had been carried out to Hurst Spit and were reassured that a considerable degree of research had been carried out to ensure that, as far as possible, the scheme was self-sustaining. Materials were dredged from the gravel banks where tidal action acting on the Spit deposited it. There was no doubt that works further along the coastline affected the situation.

**8. COAST PROTECTION (REPORT F) (MINUTE NO. 30).**

The Panel considered a review of the operation of the coast protection function to-date.

Members asked that a report should be considered, at a future meeting of the Panel, on the Council's policy on the management of some coastal areas. The evaluation of which course of action to follow for any particular stretch of coastline was based on a range of options including "do nothing" and "managed retreat". The award of government grants for coast protection schemes was based on a socio-economic evaluation. In practice, the emphasis lay on the economic issues with very little attention given to the social effects, particularly the loss of land and communities.

It was agreed that the current performance comparatives set out in tables 2 and 3 of Report F should continue to be used, but that they should be continuously refined using information flowing from the LGA Coastal Best Value Group, from shoreline management plans and from the sharing of performance related information amongst maritime authorities through membership of regional coastal groups such as SCOPAC.

**Councillor J M Hoy**  
**CHAIRMAN**